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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 003486

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SUBJECT: MFA CLAIMS AS MANY AS 35 JORDANIANS IN CUSTODY IN IRAQ, SOME MIS-IDENTIFIED AS IRAQIS

REF: BAGHDAD 398 (NO CPA MESSAGE NUMBER PROVIDED)

Classified By: CDA David M. Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) MFA officials told the Embassy this week that they believe there are as many as 35 Jordanians in Coalition custody in Iraq, and that the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad and CPA have identified 23 detainees in Coalition custody as Jordanian. The MFA believes other Jordanians might be mis-identified as Iraqi nationals. Given the local interplay of the Abu Ghreib abuse story with public claims that 1,000 Jordanians remain in Coalition custody as well as reports of additional information provided by CPA to the Jordanian mission in Baghdad, we would appreciate any confirmation CPA can provide beyond reftel on Jordanian detainees. END SUMMARY.

MFA SAYS BETWEEN 25-35 JORDANIANS IN COALITION CUSTODY

2. (C) Charge on May 4 covered reftel information on Jordanian detainees in Coalition and Iraqi correctional custody with Omar Rifai, Secretary General of the MFA. Rifai responded that the MFA appreciates Embassy, USG, and CPA efforts to identify Jordanians in custody in Iraq. Based on information the MFA has collected, however, Rifai said the MFA believes that there are more Jordanians in Coalition custody than the ten mentioned in reftel, but that the numbers are far, far short of the 1,000 claimed by the Chairman of the parliamentary human rights committee.

3. (C) Dimae Haddad, the Jordanian Charge in Baghdad and Basheer Zoubi, Deputy Director of FonMin Muasher's Private Office told PolCouns May 5 that the GOJ appreciates the cooperation of the USG and CPA in identifying Jordanians in custody. Haddad said that he has held extensive discussions with CPA and Iraqi Interior Ministry officials, and that they have jointly identified 23 Jordanians in Coalition custody. He said that, based on information from the ICRC and Jordanian family members, the GOJ believes that there could be as many as 10-15 additional Jordanians in Coalition custody incorrectly identified as Iraqi nationals. According to Zoubi, CPA officials have told Jordanian officials in Baghdad that Jordanians make up the second largest national group in Coalition custody, after Iranians. Haddad and Zoubi promised to provide a list of names and prisoner numbers to the Embassy.

SORT OUT THE JORDANIANS BEFORE JUNE 30

4. (C) Haddad said he was worried about the status of Jordanian detainees -- particularly those incorrectly identified as Iraqi nationals -- after the June 30 transfer of sovereignty. He said a senior CPA official told him that, as of June 30, all foreign detainees would be released, transferred to the custody of Iraqi authorities, or "taken to Guantanamo." The GOJ does not want large numbers of Jordanians to be transferred to Iraqi custody, fearing that they could be lost in the system since the Iraqi security services "will have a thousand other things to do" besides track foreign prisoners. He asked that the USG and CPA make a concerted effort between now and June 30 to identify, investigate, and free those Jordanians in Coalition or Iraqi custody who are not a threat and who have not committed a crime.

5. (C) Haddad said that the Coalition's legal authority to arrest and detain suspects remains unclear to him, as do Coalition procedures to identify those held, decide which detainees are turned over to Iraqi police, and clear others of charges of wrongdoing. The GOJ believes, for example, that Coalition forces hold three Jordanians who were detained while driving trucks carrying supplies for Coalition forces and had merely been in the wrong place at the wrong time. In a separate conversation with PolOff, UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) PolOff Alan Fellows echoed this sentiment,

saying that UNAMI has received "several" reports from contacts and released prisoners that Coalition forces have picked up bystanders for no apparent reason other than their proximity to clashes with Coalition forces.

COMMENT

16. (C) Unsubstantiated and undoubtedly exaggerated (but widely believed) parliamentary allegations that 1,000 Jordanians remain in Coalition custody have given the Abu Ghreib abuse story additional resonance in Jordan. In light of reported conversations between CPA and Jordanian diplomats, post would appreciate any additional details CPA can provide on Jordanians in custody in Iraq, particularly on the 23 detainees the Jordanian charge claims to have agreed on with CPA officials.

17. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE